

I will be introducing legislation to protect all our ambassadors from foreign nations that may desire to undermine their leadership here in the United States.

Also, I am intending to announce next week my introduction of a temporary protective status to help those Central Americans and others who this administration has precipitously taken away their TPS and jeopardized them in 2018.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we must reunite the children, and we must do it now.

SEXUAL ASSAULT ON OUR CAMPUSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I wish to address the House, Members of Congress, and the Chair about what I consider one of our most serious things that is happening in our country, and it has to do with sexual assault on our campuses, our universities, our colleges, and what is taking place there while students, our children, our grandchildren, go to these universities.

I want to recognize a group of individuals who have started a program, a cause is really the right word, that they call the 12th Woman. They are all members, students, former students of Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas.

The 12th Woman is a phrase that is a takeoff on another phrase that that university uses, calling the 12th Man. I look at the 12th Woman as a team, 11 on a team, and there is one more. It makes it 12, all 12 supporting each other in their cause to eliminate sexual assault on campuses, not just Texas A&M, but all the universities and colleges through the United States.

□ 1215

So these remarkable ladies started using social media to see if other people, students, former students, had encountered sexual assault on campus and what happened and what didn't happen after that was reported. Then they formed this organization called the 12th Woman.

Several of those members of the 12th Woman are here today watching Congress, and later today, they are going to go to their respective Members of Congress and talk about some of the things that are on their heart.

Constituents in the State of Texas, the reason for this request of time is that there are bad things that are happening on our university campuses. It happens because of a lot of reasons. We are talking about a lot of people, a lot of kids, in my opinion, going away from home and spending time trying to get an education at one of our universities.

I believe wholeheartedly that our universities in this country are the fin-

est educational institutions anywhere in the world. That is why we have people from all over the world coming to our universities.

So I am going to start by telling some of their stories, things that happened to them, things that they have made public. They have been bold to talk about the bad things that happened to them while they were in school.

Mr. Speaker, it takes a lot for a crime victim, especially a sexual assault victim, to come forward and publicly talk about these things. For the last, I guess, 30 years before I came to Congress, I was a prosecutor in Houston, Texas, and then I spent 22 years on the criminal bench hearing only criminal cases. And I have met, unfortunately, a lot of sexual assault victims who have come my way either when I was prosecuting their cases or as a judge.

It is tough, really, it is tough to make those statements public and come forward. But I want to read a few of these statements and these stories that happened to some of our ladies that they call the 12th Woman.

Abbie's family was based around the values of Texas A&M that it instills in its students. She was raised by two Aggie alumni, and there was never a doubt about where she would ultimately attend college: it was always Texas A&M. But like so many others, what should have been an outstanding experience, just turned sour.

One night, while hosting a Christmas party at her own apartment, she was raped. That is correct, Mr. Speaker, she was sexually assaulted.

So when she woke up the next morning, she didn't remember how a portion of that night ended. Bruises, scratches covered her arms, her legs, and her clothing was ripped and torn.

So doing everything that I think a rape victim should do, she had a rape kit conducted just a few hours later. The hospital nurse ended Abbie's SANE exam—SANE stands for sexual assault nurse examiner—and she told her, "I will see you in court," describing it as the most evidence that she had ever seen.

Abbie thought that she had a good case against her assailant. She was advised by the College Station Police Department to seek justice through the school and proceed to file her report through them.

So she filed a report. The university called a hearing.

The hearing began with what Abbie and her mom thought would be a fair playing field, until it became evident that she faced a series of well prepared attorneys at this hearing and she had no legal representation of her own. Not a single person at the university, the police department, or the hospital advised her that she had the right to retain legal representation.

During the hearing, she was, in her opinion, ambushed by her assailant's attorney, who peppered her with a lot

of questions. The fact that she had created a Facebook event for the party and offered accommodation to those who were drinking to crash at her apartment was called into question. It was if the university panel thought that Abbie's rape was her fault.

Let's get one thing straight, Mr. Speaker. Let's make this perfectly clear. Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim. It is the fault of the perpetrator, and that is the way it should be, because it is the perpetrator who caused this. The victim shouldn't feel like they did something wrong, but in our culture, sometimes they are put on trial.

Following the hearing, she was referred to a student counseling service, where she met an individual who had no training in working with sexual assault victims. So what was the point of talking to the school counseling if there was no training to handle these types of cases?

After a lengthy process and dealing with an investigative panel that she thought and believed was cold and uncaring, her assailant ultimately faced no consequences. Abbie felt betrayed by the university that she highly regarded. Her assailant just went back to class. Abbie was forced to see the man who raped her walking freely around the campus, a campus where she should have felt safe.

Ultimately, she made the decision to graduate early, ending her time at Texas A&M prematurely.

She feels like the university that she highly spoke of failed her. She says:

The university I speak so highly of has failed. Who knows if it failed before me. There just wasn't anyone to speak out about it.

Abbie joins the 12th Woman to demand change, not at just Texas A&M, but colleges across the country.

Abbie says:

It is time for Texas A&M to follow the Aggie code of honor. They should follow it themselves and unite with the sexual assault survivors to be an example of fearless change among the very best American universities.

Mr. Speaker, the Texas A&M code of honor says, "An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do."

That is Abbie's story, and I think we should thank her for making her story available for all of us.

Meghan was a fourth generation Texas A&M Aggie. Her decision to attend this prestigious school was never a question in her mind. It was an amazing experience until things went bad.

One morning, while serving as a tutor in the athletic department, a member of the Aggie football team, twice her size, exposed himself to her not 2 feet away. He made sexual advances toward her, becoming aggressive.

Terrified and shocked, she abruptly walked out of the room, trying to remain calm as he followed her.

Despite reporting the assault to her supervisor, something just went wrong.

The remainder of her assailant's tutoring sessions were not canceled. And get this: the very next morning, Meghan's assailant exposed himself to another tutor, becoming aggressive.

Mr. Speaker, Meghan feels she did not get justice against her attacker. She feels and tells me she was failed by a university that was not really committed to helping victims. She was scared in the process, scared to go back to work, terrified she might run into this individual again.

Before the hearing, the university claims she did not need a lawyer, she was not facing charges. She received no notice that her assailant, however, had hired legal representation, which he has the right to do.

Months later, Meghan's assailant was found not responsible for exposing himself to both tutors. The panel stated that it appeared he had a skin condition and just couldn't control himself. A skin condition, Mr. Speaker?

The response she received was nothing short of appalling. The school said:

Sorry, Meghan, that you were offended, but there is nothing else we can do.

Meghan has appealed that case, and did appeal that case. She still believed the university would come to provide justice for her.

At the appeals hearing, she was informed that the charge against her attacker had been downgraded from sexual exploitation to sexual harassment. What that meant was, in the university's eyes, she was removed from the remainder of the hearing and couldn't be considered as a victim.

The university supposedly has several systems in place to aid victims. Texas A&M employs a victim advocate, but no one from the Title IX office contacted Meghan. She didn't receive any information regarding what sanctions her assailant received, if any, and of course her assailant was allowed to be back on the athletic team.

Mr. Speaker, he stayed on the team until she told the media about all of this, and then he was later removed from the team and two misdemeanor charges were filed against him after she went to the media.

Meghan felt abandoned by the university. She thought the accused was protected due to his status. Texas A&M spends a lot of money on teal ribbons, according to her, for athletes to wear for sexual assault, and she says that the ribbon is not enough. Universities must put the safety and care of sexual assault victims first. I agree with her.

She says:

A&M has a chance to be fearless on every front and to be fearless in the face of such horrible things that are happening to our victims.

She wants A&M to take the lead on this that is taking place on our university campuses.

I applaud Meghan for having the courage to come forward and tell her story to the world.

Kirsten, she loved being at Texas A&M University. She considered it one

of the friendliest campuses, and enjoyed her time at one of the country's finest educational institutions.

After she returned from the winter break in the second semester of her freshman year, her happy-go-lucky bubble of college was shattered.

She was invited to hang out at her guy friend's apartment, and was led to believe that several of their mutual friends would be there.

When she arrived at the apartment, she realized that they were alone. Her so-called friend proceeded to sexually assault her.

The next day, her friends and sister pushed her to report the assault, but she didn't want to. She was made to feel like the crime was her fault. She told her resident assistant, who warned her that as an RA, she was required to report it. So a few days later, she received an email from the Division of Student Affairs inviting her to tell her story.

Time and time again, she had to relive the story in graphic detail almost directly after it happened.

One thing about sexual assault victims that unfortunately seems to happen, when they first tell the first person about what happened to them, it is not going to be the last time. Generally they tell people who are strangers, people they don't know, and they have to tell that story over and over again, and because of that, they have to relive that experience. That is what happens when sexual assault victims have to come forward. They go through that, but we should be understanding of that process.

She says:

If I hadn't already been traumatized by this, the university officials re-victimized me, certainly cementing the damage to my mental health.

It is true that any investigative panel must understand what happened before drawing conclusions, but there is a way of doing that and getting that information without being insensitive.

Kirsten says she felt as if the investigators were cold and devoid of empathy. During the disciplinary appeals panel after the deadline to submit new evidence had passed, she was informed that the assailant's fiancée, who wasn't even present the night he attacked her, was permitted to serve as a witness. This witness served only the purpose to disparage Kirsten's character.

Right before the panel began, she discovered that her assailant had, like some of the others, obtained legal counsel. Unable to have representation of her own, she ran to the Student Legal Services. They refused to help her. They wouldn't offer her legal advice. They had no victim advocate there to speak to her or on her behalf.

Kirsten, like many other victims, was alone, and she felt alone.

There was no other choice. The investigation continued.

At one point, the officials at the university asked her why didn't she scream, as if it is Kirsten's fault she was assaulted and raped.

Kirsten says the university official in the investigation became increasingly irritated, and it was abundantly clear to her that that person viewed this as a waste of the university's time.

Ultimately, the university concluded that Kirsten had likely been sexually harassed, but it was not up to the university to sanction her offender, because there was no impediment to her educational opportunity.

□ 1230

Let me repeat that. Nothing happened because, according to them, there was no impediment to her educational opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, Kirsten fully believes, in the end, the panel turned her words, her desire to complete her education, and her commitment to her family against her. And they used her resilience and her loyalty to the university as a weapon against her to absolve themselves from any responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell Nikki's story, as she recounts it. I have a total of six. For Nikki, a semester's worth of studying was about to pay off. Finals week was here. One week was all that stood between Nikki and a short break before the next semester began—that is, until she was sexually assaulted.

Following her assault, she reported to the Texas A&M clinic, creating even more stress on her. Before she left the clinic, Nikki recalls the head physician came over to her and told her: Things happen for a reason.

It was shocking to her, and it was traumatic.

Following this traumatic experience at the clinic, she decided against engaging in the reporting process, feeling that the university was not sensitive enough. She was aware of the process, because she sat on the university disciplinary appeals panel, listening to the appeals of cases similar to hers.

She did return to a private hospital for a SANE examination—once again, sexual assault nurse examination—by someone who is qualified to examine, on a medical basis, sexual assault victims. She returned home for a short break, where she says she had time to process everything.

Mr. Speaker, deciding to come forward and report the sexual assault, as I have said, is overwhelming to these victims.

After some serious soul-searching, she began the reporting process. She told the story to the university officials, like so many others, over, and over, and over again. After her shocking experience with her visit to the Texas A&M clinic, she says it felt like the reporting was getting nowhere.

After weeks of attempting to report the behavior of the school clinic, she finally received a call back, but she was dissatisfied.

The school apologized, but no change ever occurred that she knows of. She says that: "After encountering three different women's clinic physicians

with such poor manners in a sexual assault case, it is clear to me that something is wrong at the institutional level.”

It felt like she was the bad guy, forced to justify over and over again her reasons for reporting. Feeling attacked, she tried to withdraw her case.

Mr. Speaker, no victim should be forced into a situation where they feel more discouraged by reporting a rape than they do by staying silent.

But it was too much. Her grades started dropping. She started receiving Ds and Cs on tests. She had never gotten Cs and Ds. Her professors questioned her excused absences, asking if she was in trouble, only forcing her to explain the situation more and more.

Upon finding out her assailant had hired legal counsel, she asked the university if she could obtain her own legal counsel. The university discouraged her from doing so and set a quick panel date.

Ultimately, her attacker was found guilty of sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, dating violence, and sexual harassment. He was suspended for the remaining three semesters of Nikki's time at Texas A&M. She felt lucky because many survivors never receive, in her opinion, justice.

Just in my opinion, if a person is guilty of sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, dating violence, and sexual harassment, a three-semester suspension doesn't seem to be much punishment, if any.

She says: “If I felt lucky my rapist, who was found guilty, was suspended for three semesters, one of which was already halfway over, then, clearly, something was wrong procedurally,” if that happened.

Many times, so many other victims never receive any justice, and the question remains: Why is a three-semester suspension unheard of as severe punishment?

Mr. Speaker, something here is wrong. The reporting process for sexual assault should never continue to traumatize the victim at every turn.

Nikki says: “The trials of the reporting process at A&M served to exacerbate an already traumatizing experience, leaving me feeling punished, trapped, and deceived.”

She called on the university's support program for survivors of sexual assault. It is an interesting note that, during this process, she received a cease and desist letter from a lawyer wanting her to tell the university it never happened, and to pay \$10,000—I presume legal fees—to the attorney. I think that is just outrageous that that happened.

Sydney was at Texas A&M, the school she loved, a school she always wanted to go to and did go to. It was her dream school. She was in the second semester at Texas A&M and, over a welcome weekend break, she was sexually assaulted. Her assailant took advantage of her as she was unconscious, intoxicated, and unable to fend for herself.

In accordance with title IX rights, she reported the rape. Ninety-six days after reporting, she was granted an 8-hour hearing. She was told that any individual can serve as her support during the hearing, but was never advised to seek legal counsel. Here are a few lines from her victim impact statement: “Over the spring break, I decided that I didn't want to live anymore.”

Let me read that again: “Over spring break, I decided that I didn't want to live anymore. I consciously decided that this was too much for me to take. The waiting. . . . The constant paranoia. The fact that this boy did something to me that made me want to take my own life should speak for itself. I am an optimistic person. I excel at creating my own happiness. But no matter what I tried, I could not find the silver lining in this situation.”

Mr. Speaker, Sydney did seek help. She was diagnosed with PTSD.

Her impact statement continues: “What happened to me 4 months ago has impacted me in the most tremendous way—academically, spiritually, mentally, physically, in how I handle my relationships. What happened to me has ultimately changed my life and my perspective of life forever.”

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the rare cases, in my opinion, where there is some hope. Sydney did receive justice after going through all this physical and mental anguish and pain that she is going through.

Her assailant was expelled, given a no-contact order, and restricted from A&M property indefinitely. Is it the outcome that we would expect? I would hope so.

To put it into words she said: “The weight lifted off my shoulders when I heard that A&M chose to expel him . . . a weight that nearly smothered me for over 96 days. The fear of running into him on campus, the fear of seeing him around town, the fear that haunted and controlled my every move on campus, it was finally gone.”

That, to me, is justice. It means being free from the fear of constantly being attacked. The rapist has given Sydney a life sentence of mental pain. When defendants—I will call them perpetrators, predators, whatever you want to call them—commit an act of sexual assault, whether they are punished, suspended, go to prison or not, whenever that consequence under society is over, they go on with their lives. The victims don't get to go on with their lives. This is the type of offense where they think about it almost on a daily basis.

That is why I say that it gives them a life sentence of pain and anguish and turmoil. Sydney stands with her fellow Aggies, demanding justice for the victims of sexual assault.

She says: “I wouldn't be the Aggie that Texas A&M taught me to be if I remained silent after receiving justice for myself. I wouldn't be the Aggie that Texas A&M taught me to be if I didn't have the backs of these other Aggies,

other survivors,” these other members of the 12th Woman. “Texas A&M taught me to be, if I was afraid, to stand here and be counted as another one of its one-in-five victims on college campuses” of sexual assault.

Because of the time, Mr. Speaker, I am going to just relate one more story and make some comments about what we are going to do about these cases.

Kendra was a proud member of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets. Holding an executive officer title, she could not be prouder to attend the school and be part of this outstanding university that prides itself on respect for men and women in our military service.

She was on track to be commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Army—that was, until the repercussions of her sexual assault at the hands of a fellow cadet sent her world, like the others that I have talked about, into an uproar.

Texas A&M has an age-old tradition called the Aggie Ring Dunk. She and her fellow cadets, one by one, dropped their new class rings into pitchers of beer. Then they started drinking until they surfaced with the gold rings appearing in the foam.

What should have been a fun night ended in tragedy. One of her fellow cadets, who happened to be engaged to someone else, her friend, walked her and her friend to the dorm room. However, he followed her into her room, locked the door, and began assaulting her.

Despite being weakened from the alcohol, she told him “no,” pushed him away, did everything that a lady, a victim in this case, should do to get him away from her. At one point during the attack, he began suffocating her. She feared for her life.

Since her assault occurred in a campus dorm room, she was told that there would be a crime alert email sent out to the entire campus. That alert never went out. No one was warned that a violent sexual assault on campus had been reported. Not a single A&M woman was any wiser.

Kendra says: “I believe Texas A&M endangered the lives of every single A&M student that came into contact with my rapist from the time the university knew” what he had done.

She was then told that she would meet with the commandant of the corps, along with both of her parents, to address the safety and her lack of safety. Suddenly, her parents were barred from the room, not allowed to provide any support for her.

Rest assured, the general would have two assistants in the room with him. Three against one, the 20-year-old cadet versus three high-ranking military officials, to discuss rape, rape against her.

After much debate, the meeting never occurred. Instead, the dean of student life met with Kendra and her parents. She described that meeting as that individual “implied that my report of the assault was causing her

trouble, and I wasn't helping anyone by coming forward. . . . And then there were several ways that I was requesting not to see my assailant, because we lived in very close quarters and had common classes and common activities."

Every single one of those requests by her was denied to keep him away from her. They offered to move Kendra's parking spot; not the assailant's. They offered to change Kendra's schedule; not the assailant's. They offered to move Kendra's dorm to another dorm, but not the assailant's. A no-contact order was issued, but, you guessed it, it was up to Kendra to leave if the individual showed up in a classroom or the building.

Throughout the entire process, she said the university said that lawyers slow things down and aren't necessary. But Kendra obtained a lawyer that night. Shortly afterward, she received justice against her assailant.

As soon as her attorney met with school officials, the school quickly found a way to suspend the assailant until the hearing. Kendra's case was decided by the university's student conduct panel composed of three faculty members, and they found him responsible for 21 charges, including sexual abuse and sexual contact. And he was expelled.

□ 1245

It seems to me that because she hired her own private attorney she got the justice that she wanted and she deserved.

To this day, Kendra hopes university police will pursue a criminal case against her attacker. With the current backlog of DNA testing, it would take a year for her sexual assault kit to be analyzed. Until then she will continue to speak up, be part of the 12th Woman, and ask for change for her beloved university and all universities to make them safer for all students.

Those are six cases, individuals, young women, who went to college and bad things happened to them. Their statements speak for themselves. In some cases they felt like the university helped them; some cases they don't feel like the university helped them. But to a person—I was starting to say to a man—but to a woman, they all want improvements on college campuses about what has taken place on our campuses.

After all of these things came out in the public domain, the 12th Woman group met with university officials. They presented a 12th Woman report outlining specifically what happened and what they want changed on their university, and really what should be changed on other universities.

Mr. Speaker, I include the report in the RECORD.

12TH WOMAN REPORT

This report outlines the information shared between the 12th Woman and the administration of Texas A&M including Chancellor John Sharp and President Michael Young on Monday, June 25, 2018.

About 12th Woman—The 12th Woman is a group of survivors and advocates dedicated to transforming Texas A&M University policies for providing justice in cases of sexual assault that are reported.

INTRODUCTION TO MEETING WITH TEXAS A&M ADMINISTRATION

My name is Abbie Hillis, and I want to welcome everyone here tonight. Thank you to the victims for being brave enough to share your story and thank you to the administration and President Young for making this meeting a priority.

It is fair to say that we all know this meeting shouldn't even be a meeting we are forced to have. As survivors, we know the administration has had meetings like this before, recently in fact, where you were forced to listen to stories about how the policies and procedures at Texas A&M need to change. We are here tonight because there has been complete and utter failure by the leadership at Texas A&M. You all have declined to make sexual assault advocacy, policy, and procedure a priority. Instead, you continue to issue what are titled "messages to the community," in the hopes that a carefully-worded statement will keep current and future students satisfied. Well, we are saying no more. The constant gaslighting and victim blaming must end.

We come to you today with huge hearts for Texas A&M, but we also come to you with broken hearts, because you have chosen to prioritize the university's brand over justice for victims. For a university that portrays itself to the public as unique by priding itself on its core values, it is unconscionable to hear the never-ending stories over and over and over from survivors. These stories are all the same and demonstrate in each and every case that the university prioritizes athletes, money, and perceptions of safety over providing advocates and support for victims who have been sexually assaulted. Victims are silenced, shamed, and encouraged not to hire an attorney. Victims go to the Student Counseling Center only to be told not to report their story or that the issues are far greater than the SCC can handle. Victims are forced to walk on campus next to their assailant, or worse, to watch their assailant compete and represent the university on a global stage.

Our stories today will illustrate the inconsistencies in Texas A&M's reporting procedures for sexual assault crimes. There is no uniform reporting process and no one is held accountable. Current policies encourage those in charge, like some of you sitting in this room today, to brush stories aside and sweep victims under a rug. Texas A&M is spending money on ribbons for athletes to wear for sexual assault awareness but can't provide a qualified trauma counselor to support sexual assault victims. The university also spends money duplicating services that are already provided for free through the government. But this isn't new information to any of you.

Beyond hearing our stories today, I hope you all also know that we are investigating your Clery Act alerts with reports of sexual assault, as we believe there are discrepancies. We are aware that the university has hired Husch Blackwell LLP to do a "thorough" review of your sexual assault investigations related to Title IX. But we also know that this is the exact same firm that found Michigan State University compliant with Title IX prior to Larry Nassar being convicted of over 200 counts of sexual assault. Maybe if MSU actually hired a team of attorneys that genuinely had the university's best interest at heart, they wouldn't find themselves in a \$500 million settlement. We are curious, is this the same outcome you

all want for Texas A&M? As I mentioned before, none of this information is new, yet these issues still come up and we get the same response from the administration with no results. There is no doubt that the university is proficient in providing a statement in attempt to address an issue, but we all know that words only go so far and actions speak so much louder, actions that you all, to date, have not had the decency and respect to make a priority.

Our goal is not to spread awareness to this administration; you know very well these issues exist. Instead, our goal is to invoke action with the leadership of the university. Texas A&M has the ability to be a leader among universities across the nation. You have an opportunity to address these issues and create a system that actually works to protect and advocate for victims of sexual assault. We can either choose to work together and create change or we will have to work against each other and force change. Ultimately, it is up to you, the leadership of Texas A&M, to decide which route we will take. What we are asking for is simple: a commitment to integrity, to ensure that all Aggies are safe to attend Texas A&M University.

Mr. POE of Texas. Also, the school, Texas A&M, has responded. The president met with the 12th Woman, the ladies in this group, and had a meeting with them and has issued a comprehensive statement, as they call it, comprehensive reviews and actions and next steps by the president of the university.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD what Texas A&M's response to all of this is.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEWS, ACTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

(July 2, 2018)

Dear Aggie Community, I would like to provide you with an update regarding review plans recently announced that seek ways to improve how the university addresses sexual assault investigations. Since the last update, below are some of the efforts underway now and in the near future:

Robin Means-Coleman is, as reported earlier, leading the internal review. She has begun the following initiatives, to which she and those involved will add additional actions throughout the review:

Assemble the internal review committee. The committee is comprised of a team of experts, to include: students including sexual assault survivors; faculty whose scholarship focuses on sexual assault; staff including student assistance services; a representative from the community Sexual Assault Resource Center (SARC); and others;

Analyze related university rules and Standard Administrative Procedures (SAPs);

Examine Student Affairs Title IX processes, from intake to post-process;

Identify ways to improve communications with students regarding available resources, advocates, and advisors; and

Understand staffing allocations and needs.

EVP and Provost Dr. Carol Fierke is, as reported, the lead liaison to the third-party review firm, Husch Blackwell (HB). HB will be on campus beginning this month to interview students, faculty, staff, community advocates and others. HB was selected because of their expertise and deep level of scrutiny as it pertains to assessments of policies and, importantly, challenges in implementing those policies. Primary interview input, process analysis, training review and benchmarking to other universities will be some of their work. We will make available

to HB the information and resources that they require. Significantly, as is essential to any meaningful results in a third-party review, we will also stay out of their way so that they may do their work independently and unfettered.

During the course of these reviews, as opportunities for improvement are identified, we will take action. We will not wait until conclusion of reviews to implement what we are able to improve as we move along.

Since my last message, an Aggie-led sexual assault survivors group agreed to meet with our leadership team last week. The Chancellor, Provost and I along with other campus leaders listened carefully as individuals bravely shared their experiences. We are deeply grateful for their input. We will not comment on any individual case or publicly share details of that private discussion, but I want to sincerely thank them for their testimonies and willingness to share with us directly. I reiterate our commitment to addressing concerns brought forth.

We are committed to keeping our Aggie community informed as these important reviews and resulting actions progress. It is important to remind you of the standing invitation for all Aggies to send suggestions to feedback@tamu.edu, which we are reading.

I want to thank you again for your input, caring and support as leaders inside and outside of the university advance this important work.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL K. YOUNG,
President.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Texas A&M is not alone in the fight to provide victims a voice. As stated in one of the victim's statements that I read into the RECORD, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center reports that each year one in five women will be assaulted while in college. One in five, 20 percent, in those 4 or 5 years. To me that is a staggering statistic.

According to End Rape on Campus, an American woman who attends college is more likely to be a victim of sexual assault than a woman who does not go to college. That means whatever you think it means—one in five.

Mr. Speaker, most of us in the House are parents. I am blessed to have three daughters and a son, and I have 12 grandkids, eight of which are girls. Parents need to be aware of these statistics. One in five will be assaulted while in college as a student.

So what we want to do and what the 12th Woman wants to do is to stop these statistics and bring them down. I understand that at Texas A&M, the statistics—and I may be wrong—the statistics show that 1 in 14 are assaulted. At the same time, institutions of higher education across the country, to me, do not have an incentive to acknowledge the problem publicly, to address it.

We can understand why universities don't really talk a lot about what is happening with crimes on campus. They just don't. It is about the image of the university and other things. But it is not being talked about, I think, enough so that people are on notice that there is a problem.

Here are some solutions to the chances of having an assault committed on campus and what we can do

about it as public, Members of Congress, and what universities can do about it. Some of those solutions are presented in the president's report at Texas A&M. Many of the solutions are presented in what these victims, the 12th Woman, tell us about.

The current oversight—because there are Federal laws that talk about reporting all crimes, including assault—seems to affect encouraging colleges to underreport sexual assaults.

I certainly applaud these young women for having the courage to come forward and tell their stories to the world. This 12th Woman group, as I said, are here today, and they are advocating for change on the national level. It has nothing to do with Texas A&M. It has everything to do with changing all of our universities. It is a call to action. The 12th Woman is dedicated to bringing change to the way universities address sexual assault, not just at A&M, but across the country.

I will stand with the 12th Woman, Mr. Speaker, for their coming forward and telling their stories. These stories that you heard are not unique to one university. They happen all over the country.

So what are we doing about it?

Hopefully, I have shown part of the problem. Now it is up to us. I am talking about Congress. Victims of crime on college campuses—or really any other place—sexual assault victims don't have high-dollar lawyers from New York City to represent them. Whether it is in a university setting or whether it is in a courtroom, they don't. Some of them do, but most of them don't. As stated in these cases, most of them are alone when they are trying to resolve this problem before officials at the school.

The United States Congress must be their voice.

How do we become their voice? We make sure there is the right legislation filed to protect our daughters and our sons when they go to our universities. We have some legislation. The Clery Act is one of these. We are going to try to improve it.

So I am talking about three pieces of legislation. These are pieces of legislation that are bipartisan. I will repeat that. It is bipartisan. So it may not get a whole lot of notoriety because we are not fussing, fighting, and feuding with each other. Both sides agree. I want to thank CAROLYN MALONEY from New York and JACKIE SPEIER from California—bipartisan—for working on these pieces of legislation.

They will help combat sexual assault on campus, provide victims with a clear path to reporting to the universities, make sure victim advocates are ready and available to all students nationwide, and make sure that victims are able to access a qualified nurse examiner, a forensic examiner.

Let me mention the first one. It is called the Megan Act. It is bipartisan. Megan Rondini lived in Austin, Texas. She went to school at the University of

Alabama. While she was a sophomore there, she was at a local hangout, a bar, and came in contact with a former student. She was taken to his place. She was sexually assaulted, jumped out of the second story window at his place, and then the whole system seemed to fall apart.

She went to the hospital, but the person at the hospital didn't really understand what the responsibility was of that medical test. The rape kit was taken, but nobody knows where it is. It is gone. The police interrogated her, I think, because they knew who the accused was. The parents were important people at the university. They didn't have anything to do with the case and even talked about filing charges on her.

Then she went to the university and talked to a counselor. The counselor said:

Well, I know the accused, and I am not qualified to talk to you about it.

But they didn't furnish her with somebody else.

So she didn't get help from the university, didn't get help at the hospital, and didn't get help from the police department. She had a lot of emotional problems and decided to transfer. So she transferred from the University of Alabama to SMU in Dallas, Texas.

Shortly after she transferred, Mr. Speaker, she committed suicide. She couldn't handle it, all of these things going on in her mind. So she paid; she got the death penalty for what happened to her. Megan Rondini could have been anybody's daughter.

So we have filed the Megan Rondini Act. What does it do? It does one thing specifically. It says universities and colleges must provide a SANE or a SAFE, sexual assault forensic examiner, to victims of sexual assault, or have one available for them nearby so that when they go to report this trauma medically they get treatment from an expert. It is bipartisan legislation. We ought to pass this legislation, get it on the House floor and pass it to make our universities better.

I will say this about the University of Alabama, because of this thing that happened at their school, they changed a lot of things. Good for them that they changed a lot of their procedures.

I would ask the Speaker how much time I have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ESTES of Kansas). The gentleman has 17 minutes remaining.

Mr. POE of Texas. Okay. I will talk a little faster. I am from Texas. We talk slower. I would like to get more than 17 minutes, but I understand.

JACKIE SPEIER and I have filed a bill called the HALT Act, HALT Campus Sexual Violence Act. I will give as many details as I can, Mr. Speaker.

The National Institute of Justice estimates that 63 percent of universities shirk their already legal responsibility when reporting sexual assault violent crimes. They are already supposed to report it; they don't. This bill will make sure that they do report it.

It allows the Department of Education to issue financial penalties to people who don't comply with Title IX. It increases the penalties up to \$100,000. It allows a private right of action by the victim on campus, and it requires public disclosure of a list of colleges and universities under investigation in violation of Title IX and the Clery Act. It increases funding so that universities can do this. The HALT Act is a good piece of legislation.

The third piece of legislation by CAROLYN MALONEY of New York and me—it is pretty bipartisan. CAROLYN MALONEY from New York is a progressive, liberal Democrat. TED POE is kind of a conservative guy from Texas. We are joining together to sponsor the Campus Accountability and Safety Act.

What does it do? It provides, specifically, victim advocates in sexual assault cases to victims of sexual assault on campus. It does a lot of other things, too. I hope we can get both of these on the House floor soon. It also requires that there is one reporting mechanism.

In other words, if you are complaining of sexual assault by a student, there is one avenue on campuses. Other campuses, such as the ones that have the Corps of Cadets, you go through the Corps of Cadets. If it is against a faculty member, for example, you go that route. If it is against an athlete, you go a different route. So we need to combine all of those in all of our reporting systems so that students know and are put on notice that they can go through one specific route. These legislations do a lot of other specific things, too.

Recently I was at Rice University. I had Members of Congress down there. We did a sexual assault forum on campus. What happened? Rice University is doing a lot of good things. One of the things they do is just make it real obvious that there are things that students can do.

Mr. Speaker, I include this poster in the RECORD.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Rice University has supportive and caring faculty, staff, and students who are here to help you.

If you have experienced any kind of sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence and/or stalking, it is not your fault and you have options.

Rice University's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits relationship violence, stalking, and sexual misconduct. These behaviors include physical and verbal abuse, sexual assault, unwanted sexual contact, and sexual harassment.

For emergency assistance, call:

RUPD/REMS.

For confidential counseling, call (24/7):

Rice Counseling Center

Houston Area Women's Center

the Montrose Center

Students can learn about their options at Rice by contacting:

Title IX Coordinator

Student Wellbeing and Title IX Support

To learn more or to find a STRIVE Liaison:

Visit safe.rice.edu

Email TitleIXSupport@rice.edu

Mr. POE of Texas. They post these posters throughout the university and restrooms telling them basically you are not alone and here is what you can do to educate and what you can do if a crime is committed against you.

It is a good idea. They have a protocol that I think many universities ought to look at. They have designed a student-based—really?—a program that all students are required to take when they are an incoming freshman. It is not just a 1-hour course. It is several weeks long. They educate students on how to deal with other people—relationships—that a lot of them have never been trained in doing.

Mr. Speaker, I have been talking about, I think, a very serious thing that happens. Here in Congress, we spend a lot of time talking. Right before I talked, you heard a lot of talking on both sides. But we spend a lot of time talking about our national defense, and we spend a lot of money on airplanes, aircraft carriers, and our military. I'm not saying that we shouldn't. But it is defense spending to make us safe from foreign countries.

Should we not be as concerned about the safety of Americans in America and maybe refocus on their safety?

I think we can and we should. We need to make sure we get our priorities straight.

□ 1300

I have known a lot of sexual assault victims in my career at the courthouse for 30-plus years. I still keep in contact with them on a periodic basis. Sometimes they just call me to check in. I have known sexual assault victims who, even after the trial and the person went off to the Texas penitentiary, committed suicide.

Mr. Speaker, rape, sexual assault is a different type of crime than your car being stolen or your house being burglarized. It affects the individual in the deepest part of their soul. Sometimes the offender tries to steal the identity, the soul, the self-worth of the victim. Many of them feel that way for a long time.

We in the House of Representatives have the responsibility to be the voice of sexual assault victims in our country and do what we can to make sure that they have due process, that the same Constitution that protects the rights of offenders—and I totally believe in those rights—protects the rights of people who are victims of crime.

Due process and justice must balance both of those so that we get the right decision for the right reason when these things happen to, primarily, our female athletes or female students throughout our universities.

I admire these women who have come forward, being bold to make public what happened to them—bad things—and our response should be: We are on your side. We are in it together. We are going to do what we can to make our great universities even greater and pro-

tect our young men and women on college campuses.

The 12th Woman. I would say, Mr. Speaker, don't mess with the 12th Woman. These are relentless, tenacious young women who want to take what happened to them and turn it around and make it something that we can prevent, make it a positive thing.

My grandmother, who was the most influential person in my life—and I will close with this, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the time—lived to a ripe old age of 99. She was the most influential person in my life, even more than both my parents, who are both alive. They are 93 now. She told me that there is nothing more powerful than a woman who has made up her mind.

I think these women have made up their mind, and we need to join them and be together in our calls to stop sexual assault on campuses and tell our universities and help our universities make those places safer because our American children and children from other countries that go to our universities are worth fighting for. It is our job to do so, Mr. Speaker.

And that is just the way it is.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my colleague Congressman TED POE holding this important Special Order Hour to honor survivors of sexual violence on our college campuses, and in particular the brave members of the 12th Woman, a group of survivors from Texas A&M University who are speaking truth to power about their experiences. Judge POE has been unwavering in his pursuit of justice for victims of sexual violence on the bench and in Congress. I applaud his strong advocacy and tireless dedication to this incredibly important cause. He is a true ally and his legacy on this issue will continue to help countless victims and survivors move forward.

When parents drop off their children for their first year of college, we expect our institutions of higher learning to keep them safe. But that's not the reality for 20 percent of young women and six percent of young men who are destined to become victims of sexual assault on campus. To make matters worse, survivors are constantly told that they are responsible for their assault—from being penalized for so-called 'code of ethics' violations, like drinking at parties or going into other students' dorm rooms, to being blamed for not fighting back.

That includes a brave survivor at Texas A&M who had the wherewithal to alert her school that her rapist was allowed back on the swim team after being suspended for only one semester and not being subject to criminal charges. The school's response speaks volumes—"I regret your displeasure with the perceived impact, and I wish you all the best as

you continue to seek healing". The school's failure to protect the survivor and other potential victims is unacceptable.

They are not alone. Universities continue to inadequately deal with perpetrators across the country—from expulsions after graduation, to honor code violations that carry less of a penalty than plagiarism, to allowing perpetrators to directly cross-examine their victims about their past sexual history during the so-called investigative process. This kind of antiquated victim-blaming and -shaming must end.

That is why I am introducing the bipartisan Hold Accountable and Lend Transparency or HALT Campus Sexual Violence Act with my colleagues Congressmen TED POE and BRIAN FITZPATRICK to ensure that our colleges and universities do everything they can to hold perpetrators accountable and to provide the support survivors need and deserve.

WHAT TAX REFORM MEANS TO PENNSYLVANIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ROTHFUS) for 30 minutes.

Mr. ROTHFUS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes this afternoon during this Special Order just to go over some highlights of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act as we continue to see very robust economic growth happening across the country, including in my district back in western Pennsylvania.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is the culmination of years spent listening to the stories of families back home who had nothing left over at the end of the month, of families who were struggling to save for retirement, pay off loans, and simply make ends meet. These stories are not just unique to my district, but they are coming in from all across America to the House of Representatives.

For too long, hardworking Americans toiled under a broken Tax Code filled with loopholes and special interest carve-outs. For most of the last decade, we had sluggish growth, stagnant wages, and limited opportunity across the country, including parts of Pennsylvania. When an economy is stagnant and not healthy, fewer job opportunities exist and workers' hard-earned wages often do not keep up with expenses.

Since being elected in 2012, I told my constituents that it did not have to be that way, that we could do better, that we deserve better. That is why 6 months ago, my colleagues and I passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and the President signed it into law.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act puts hardworking Americans first by allowing them to keep more of their paychecks, bringing businesses home from overseas, and creating that healthier economy.

To help workers keep more of their wages, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act nearly doubles the standard deduction from \$6,350 per individual to \$12,000, and

from \$12,700 to \$24,000 for married couples, essentially doubling the amount of income that will not be subject to Federal income taxes.

It also expands the child tax credit to \$2,000 to help parents with the cost of raising kids, and adds a new credit to help provide care for elderly family members and adults with disabilities.

With these changes, the zero tax bracket increases significantly. Consequently, more Americans will be fully exempt from Federal income taxes, and they can keep more of their hard-earned wages.

Additionally, before the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the United States had the highest business tax rates in the industrialized world. Pennsylvania's combined Federal and State corporate tax rate stood at nearly 45 percent.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is removing a choke hold on our economy, decreasing for American corporations the tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent. Consequently, the Pennsylvania combined rate now stands at 31 percent. This puts American companies in a better place, from a competitive standpoint, than their Chinese and Mexican counterparts.

Think about that. Prior to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, China was treating its companies better, Mexico was treating its companies better, with lower tax rates, and you saw investments going into those countries. Now, with the United States having lower tax rates, it is turning around.

This improvement, as well as other provisions such as the immediate expensing of new equipment, is causing companies to bring cash back from overseas and invest in America and hire workers and raise pay.

Under the new system, small business employers, known as pass-through enterprise—your partnerships, your LLCs—will be able to deduct 20 percent of their qualified business income, and the remaining income will be taxed at new and lower rates.

This translates into a significant tax cut for Main Street businesses, freeing up resources that will allow them to innovate and invest in their communities, hire workers, and increase wages.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act also established a program that will ensure that the benefits of our booming economy reach areas that have been historically overlooked: the opportunity zone programs.

States are identifying areas that have struggled with high poverty and sluggish economic growth. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act provides tax incentives to direct private investment into and reinvigorate these communities. These communities have been starved of robust capital investment for decades. That is about to change.

In my district in western Pennsylvania, Governor Wolf from Pennsylvania has designated zones across the State. In western Pennsylvania, in my district, we have tracts that have been

designated in Beaver Falls, Midland, Johnstown, and Aliquippa. These are strong communities, Mr. Speaker, that once again can thrive thanks to the attractive incentives offered in the opportunity zone investment.

This is how it is going to work.

People may have an asset they have been holding for a long time and have a capital gain there. There is \$6 trillion locked up in capital gains across this country. If somebody wants to make an investment in a community where there has not been an investment, they can sell that asset, defer their capital gain, and invest in that fund. If they hold that in the fund for 10 years, they can defer the tax for that 10 years, get a step up in basis, and here is where it is great: they will not pay taxes on the appreciation of that investment in the opportunity zone.

Think about that capital that can flow into those communities and stay there and grow a business. That is private capital coming in, which is different from a government grant that might go in.

You have individuals who are looking to make investments. They want that investment to grow. They want that investment to do well. They want that investment to prosper in these communities. This is good news for those communities and good news for people who live there and can get jobs as a result of the investments in these opportunity zones.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is not just about simplifying our Tax Code. It is saving people money. It is about empowering people in Pennsylvania and throughout our Nation with hope and opportunity to better their lives for themselves, their families, and their communities.

These reforms within the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act are resulting in real benefits that are being experienced across the Nation. Already, 90 percent of American workers are receiving higher take-home pay under the new withholding tables. Four million workers have received bonuses, raises, or expanded benefits, and over 1 million new jobs have been created, including 160,000 manufacturing jobs.

For the first time in many years, there are more job openings than job seekers. Last month, the unemployment rate was 4 percent, nearly the lowest in decades, and the unemployment rates for African Americans and Hispanics were at historic lows. Fifty-eight percent of small business owners are confident about hiring new employees, and more Americans are optimistic about their future.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is bringing workers who were pushed to the sidelines during the previous years back into the labor force and restoring hope to everyday Americans. In June, 600,000 people entered the labor force, and 213,000 new jobs were added.

Businesses in my district are reinvesting in their employees, communities, and operations through bonuses,